

## Chapter 5

### Monday, August 26, 1963, Sokroshera Cove

Judson woke up early on Monday morning. After only eleven days on the island, he suddenly decided that he didn't want to forget all the adventures he was experiencing. He'd seen a big box of unused spiral notebooks in the school's attic, and asked if he could have a few. So he began writing almost daily, jotting down his thoughts and impressions. It was his way of sorting out this brand new environment. He kept his writings carefully hidden under his bed. Then he remembered that he'd been thinking about his grandma on his dad's side, the only Stateside person he actually missed, and decided she would enjoy hearing from him. So he wrote down as many of the events as he could remember in a letter to his grandma, including little profiles of his new friends, and was surprised to see that he had written five pages. If he'd been wasting his time watching TV, the best he would have been able to muster would have been a scanty one-pager. He told her his thoughts about the new things he would soon be experiencing as he closed the letter. He knew that attending school here in the village would be a completely new experience. He could be a good student, except in math and anything really technical in science. But this would be his first time in a classroom with all eight grades at once, and as a student with his father as the only teacher. He told his grandma that he hoped it would all work out all right.

His work for Mr. Faltrip now completed, Judson had been helping his father sort books and scrounge for supplies in the drafty old schoolhouse. Some of the textbooks were so old and battered that they should have been disposed of long ago, but the reading series was within a few years of up to date. The math books looked a little weird to Judson when he thumbed through them, and he shuddered when he realized that most of the tasks were "story problems." His favorite! He thought of Sandy Ann's Vomit Face. Judson had joked with his father about the sorry old science books they found. He pretended to quote, "Students, pay attention: 'It is not known whether Man will ever conquer the air... ' c'mon, Dad, did they write these books on clay tablets?" His father had laughed, but had then gotten serious: "The people who decide how to educate the village children around Alaska do not seem like they really want to invest the time and money necessary to bring their world closer to the rest of the country. Alaska may be a state, but it's a very new one, and a lot of the old ways are still hiding in the corners, like in this place." He had quickly added, "But we can make this work." Judson noticed the "we" in the sentence and wondered just what his father had in mind.

Already the classrooms looked almost nothing like they had when the Hansens inspected them the first afternoon. Oh, the paint was still worn and the linoleum cracked and pulling up here and there, but the rooms were bright with fresh light bulbs, nicely washed blackboards, and worn but clean student desks arranged in little clusters to help Mr. Hansen "personalize the instruction," as he'd said in his teacher language.

Sandy Ann had helped a bit at first, but was working with her mother on some family project and hadn't been around most days until mid-afternoon, about the time Mr. Hansen would cut Judson loose. But it was mostly Herman and Barbara who helped. "Mom's at the store, Dad's doing some big job for the cannery, and we're bored," announced Barbara matter-of-factly from the side porch near their apartment one misty morning. She had Herman in tow. The young lady calmly continued, "Mom said if we got bored, we should come here and help out." Barbara was a literal, direct, unambiguous sort who (so far) was always serious but rarely unhappy, who seemed to love helping out and feeling useful. Her occasional flashes of insight proved that she had been listening the whole time even when she didn't seem to be.

Herman just seemed to enjoy hanging out with Judson, the new kid in town, who had been so excited to share adventures with him up at the fort and who had spontaneously stepped in to help him bear the pain on the day his dad had beat him. Judson often couldn't decipher what was happening behind those too-long black bangs and dark, moody eyes. But Herman was as loyal as anyone he'd ever met. Even if he didn't really think fixing up the school was the best activity for the dwindling days of summer, he never complained. He had been a regular visitor the past couple of days, he and Barbara. Judson got the impression that this level of loyalty and friendship was something new for Herman. Judson realized, deep down, that he never wanted to do anything to betray this new friend's trust.

Now the three kids stood before the teacher, quietly expecting him to rattle off a list of chores. They were taken aback by Mr. Hansen's silence. "Not much to do today," said Mr. Hansen finally, with a twinkle in his eye, looking out the window at the calm weather and bright morning sunshine. Just then, Truck Brother Danny Pedersen pounded up the steps, burst into the room with a cheery greeting, swung Barbara like a sack of flour over his shoulder, tousled up Herman's hair, and shot Judson an ice-melting grin. Danny was one of the adults who seemed like a constant party to the kids in the village. "We're going to town," stated Danny, swinging the now giggling Barbara back down off his shoulder. So she *can* laugh, thought Judson to himself. "Jay-Jay, prepare for a grand adventure in beautiful downtown Kodiak! Are you ready, Mr. Jeffrey?" The kids were not too surprised to hear Danny call Mr. Hansen by his first name. Mr. Pederson was an adult, after all, even if he still seemed to have one foot permanently planted in adolescence. "Th' boat's all gassed up and ready to go, and tied up at the front dock waitin' for us."

The "front dock" was the section parallel to the shoreline where the smaller fishing boats could unload their cargo. "Ready," said Mr. Hansen, and turned to his son. "Jud, go get a warm coat, and get your wallet, too. We're gonna spend awhile out on the water." "Probably *spend* awhile in town, too, haw?" laughed Danny, and handed the Rezoff kids each an envelope. "Your mom said it was mad money for the big city!" Since Judson had his crisp five dollars from Mr. Faltrip, plus a few more that he'd managed not to spend on the way in, he didn't feel the slightest envy upon seeing the envelopes.

All three kids bounded down the stairs toward Danny's truck, a bright red 1958 F-100 four-wheel drive that, to Judson, looked somehow out of place in Sokroshera Cove. The wraparound windshield and forward tilt of the windows in the side doors gave the vehicle an eager look. The four-wheel drive conversion kit that Danny had installed himself put the cab and truck bed a good foot or so higher off the ground than a normal truck. Judson thought it looked like it was about to take flight. The Rezoff kids knew to jump into the bed of the truck, and Judson followed suit. He'd left the tailgate down or they would never have been able to reach it. As it was, it took both boys pulling and a bit of a scramble to get Barbara up into the truck bed. Mr. Hansen checked his coat pocket for a list he'd written, and climbed into the shotgun seat. Herman settled onto the hump over a rear tire and turned toward Judson. "Danny bought this truck one summer after a good salmon season. He uses it to help Mr. Faltrip with the cattle." Herman also seemed to be implying that a truck this new and nice was a little unnecessary for a town like Sokroshera Cove.

"What does the other Truck Brother drive?" Judson asked, having never seen either vehicle before today. "Old Jake? Jakob? He's got an old Dodge Power Wagon boom truck." At Judson's puzzled expression, he explained, "It's a really tough pickup truck with a crane and winch on the front end." Judson was still puzzled, and asked, "Like a backwards tow truck then?" Herman nodded tentatively, and then admitted he'd never seen a tow truck. Judson was curious about what they'd use such a setup for, but he just asked, "Where did Truck Brother Jake get a rig like that?" "Oh, that's between him and the angels," Herman said, and then added, "But like everything else here, he bought it and brought it." Then Herman remembered. "Oh, wait! Mr. Lindseth told me Jake bought it off Darrell Chaffin on Woody Island. I guess the FAA station over there had an extra one, and that's why it's that golden yellow. All their vehicles are that color, and when we go into town, we can see the yellow trucks parked near the dock over on the island." Kids in this town seemed to be extra observant when it came to their surroundings, thought Judson, or maybe it's mostly how Herman's brain always is. Judson left the question about the boom truck's purpose for some other day.

All this time, they had been moving slowly down the bumpy, grassy road, but they turned and drove up a wooden ramp onto the dock, and their ride smoothed out considerably. The planks below the big truck clattered and bounced as though no longer nailed down. Danny parked the truck near the old retort building, around the corner from the generators. With only a handful of vehicles in town, and the cannery shut down, nobody worried about parking spaces. They might not have worried anyway, unless salmon was being unloaded at the front dock. It was only a few steps to the edge of the dock, where a thick square railing of timber kept trucks and people from falling into the bay.

Barbara was already climbing down the old metal ladder, and Herman had lined himself up to do the same. Judson peered over the edge to identify Danny's boat. It was one of the yellow and blue cannery seiners, and the name in white letters on the blue hull said, *Salmonchanted Eve*. Judson smiled at the joke; "Some Enchanted Evening" was one of those old people songs he recognized from one of his own grandma's Mantovani records. And changing the last part to *Eve* left it

vague enough that it could refer to a woman. Judson wondered exactly what (or *whom*) the name referred to. Judson looked at Danny with amusement; he was losing count of all the colorful characters he'd met so far in this town.

Soon they were underway, and Danny proved himself to be a careful, capable navigator, his goofy side buried by the serious business of piloting his seiner. They took the open sea route, because the weather had been clear for a few days, and there probably wouldn't be too much chop. In "iffy" weather, or after a storm, the usual best route was to duck south through the Ouzinkie Narrows and take the more sheltered channel between the islands, provided you hit the tide right in the narrows. But the shallow water ahead, around Spruce Cape tended to be rough almost any time, especially inside the buoy line near the reefs. Nobody told Judson that part.

For most of the almost three hours, Judson sat on the bow, with his back to the windows of the cabin, on a coil of tie-up line. He sat between Barbara and Herman, and listened as they described various capes, points, and islands to him. As they passed the south end of Spruce Island, Herman singled out a point on the jagged coastline and a triangular rock that rose from the surrounding surf. "That's Monk's Lagoon in there, and do you see Monk's Rock? Named for *Apa...*" (he pronounced it AH-pah) "...Herman who lived around there in Russian days. He's supposed to have done miracles and stuff. I got my name from him." The mountain, which was the defining feature of Spruce Island, was at least twice as tall as the one on their island, considerably longer, and obviously a real mountain. It was also named after Father Herman, he learned. The people here were trying not to forget him, and in fact had gone out of their way to honor him.

Judson jumped with surprise when he suddenly found that they had company. A half-dozen black and white porpoises zigged, zagged, and cut to the surface on either side of them for about fifteen minutes. The beautiful animals were attracted to the sound of the engine, somehow knowing that this boat meant them no harm. Soon after that, Judson began to feel cold with his nose to the wind, and decided to go inside the warm cabin. They had almost reached Spruce Cape. Herman and Barbara looked at each other, but kept their thoughts to themselves. Neither of them followed Judson below deck.

Inside, the seiner was the picture of compactness. The engine compartment also served as the table, with a rubber mat atop it to help prevent dishes from sliding. There was a tiny but potent oil stove, with little railings holding a teakettle that emitted periodic wisps of steam. Above the stove, racks held dishes and cups snugly in place, and below one of the first side windows, a small single sink was half-full with dishes and pans. In the bow, in a V pattern, were two rows of bunks, one above another, with crumpled sleeping bags still stuffed into them. On a stand in the very center of the V, right beneath the center window, was a wheel and compass, gear lever, throttle, and engine rpm gauge. The steering wheel (called a "helm" on a boat) was attached to a cog and a long chain built like it was for some giant bicycle, on a loop that stretched up to the "flying bridge," an outside navigation center on the roof of the cabin. Another loop on the same shaft that held

the helm stretched down to a rod and pulley system that operated the boat's rudder in the stern. This inside wheel was moving back and forth in perfect synch with its twin on the flying bridge above, where Danny and Judson's dad sat, undoubtedly in deep conversation about some grown-up topic only marginally interesting to him.

So Judson found a Life magazine and settled down on a tall stool next to the engine/table to read it. He didn't notice that the motion of the seiner was steadily increasing, and that he was no longer cold, but uncomfortably warm from the combined heat of the engine and the galley stove. He should have noticed the pungent engine fumes, too, but sat engrossed in the magazine, its photos and ads suddenly reminding him of the world he had left. He started reading an article with colorful photos. He was soon to forget the topic of that article. Judson had to get up *now!* He climbed quickly up the steep ladder steps to the deck above and found himself head over the gunwales, loudly losing his breakfast. His mind racing, trying to avoid another bout of heaves, and silently apologizing to porpoises everywhere, he kept at it until his innards were sure he had nothing left to give. He sat, unsteady, stars dancing around his head, on the hatch cover. He was feeling chilled yet sweating like a pig, and embarrassed. First boat trip and I lose it, he thought. His friends at the bow would need considerably more of a rolling sea than this to succumb to seasickness, if they could even feel sick at all.

Herman had seen him leave the cabin, and he and Barbara came aft, holding carefully to the hand railings, until they joined him sitting on the hatch. "You did everything wrong," Barbara gave him an explanation, Barbara-style, full of facts and without recrimination, but with no preliminary small talk either. "You went inside, you got hot, you started reading, and you didn't keep your eyes away from the boat. No wonder!" Herman attempted to cover for the very green-about-the-gills Judson, and explained to his sister, "Aw, Barbara, how was he gonna know? They don't have oceans in Arizona!" He turned toward Judson and provided a more formal lesson in stomach control. "Jay-Jay, the best way not to get sick is to keep fresh air in your face, and keep looking out at the horizon instead of the boat. Dunno why that works, but it does." He added, with a bit of compassion, "*Nobody* likes the smell of the engine when the boat is rolling." He stifled a short giggle and said, "You said you were a quarter Indian. But upchucking sure made you look like a *white* guy—white as a sheet!" Judson could have felt offended by this, but felt Herman's hand pat him lightly twice on the shoulder as he said it. Judson summoned up a weak joke in response, "I thought he kicked the bucket, but he just turned a little pail." He tried a half-hearted laugh, "A little pale... Grandma told me that one. I think her jokes bug Dad sometimes—it's funny to watch." It was an effort to talk, and he still felt a little light headed.

Danny, on the flying bridge above, called to Herman above the noisy engine. "Herm, go below and make him something to eat. We're past the cape now, so it'll be smooth into town." Herman emerged almost immediately with a handful of saltine crackers and a mug of hot water with a steeping tea bag in it. Apparently, fishermen kept these things easy to find. "Try this. It's quick, and it works." Judson

did feel better almost immediately, and marveled at the knowledge you had to amass to survive in an island environment like this.

Soon Judson was feeling well enough to look around. They were passing by civilization already; off to his right he could see some antennas with military-looking large silver Quonset huts. Then they were passing what seemed to be the town dump, with a rusting blue car prominently displayed halfway down a cliff of debris. He looked back across the stern and saw rocks, foaming waves, and a jagged coastline in the direction they had come, a spectacular but uncomfortable place. He decided the next time he went around Spruce Cape, he would view it from somewhere on deck, and perhaps avoid turning his stomach inside out.

He decided to join his father and Danny up on the flying bridge for the last part of their voyage. Danny was pointing to three large, white buildings on a ridge to their right, built in a salt-box style. "That's the Kodiak Baptist Mission. It's an orphanage. One of 'em is in Ouzinkie, but it doesn't take children anymore. Smith family lives there and runs the *Evangel* mission boat. Now *that's* an odd little craft, but it gets around pretty well. You'll see it around." He pointed back at the Mission. "My brother and sister and I lived in the cottage in Ouzinkie for a long time with old Miss Setze and Miss Rold." Danny launched into some stories of childhood adventures in the Mission as they passed an increasing number of houses on the shoreline to their right, and something that looked like a large school at the top of a ridge. Judson's curiosity aroused, he was about to ask some questions when Danny cut the power way back and began preparing to tie up. Danny once again had an attitude that was all business. He wouldn't be telling stories for a while.

On the right shoreline was Kodiak Airways, where a Grumman Widgeon painted white and red was poised to descend the ramp into the Near Island channel and take off for parts unknown, its propellers already turning. Perhaps it was the one Benny Benson had been working on earlier. Like a gash in the hillside, Tagura Road, a one-lane alley, connected all of the shoreline homes and businesses, including the bustling Alvine's boat repair and the beach hangar of Kodiak Airways, to the rest of the town. Judson recognized that road from the day when he'd first flown to the village, and from the water, it looked even more precarious. Herman was explaining all of this as they passed, probably trying to get Judson's mind off his recent distress, when Danny called to him. Herman went to the bow and stood waiting. He already knew what to do.

Danny spoke a few words of direction to Mr. Hansen, who descended from the flying bridge and stood near the stern of the seiner. Moments later, after a few expert maneuvers by Danny and quick work by his deck hands, they were tied up securely at the Standard Oil dock in the channel. Judson paused to watch the Kodiak Airways Widgeon roar down the channel and rise into the air, its engines echoing off the nearby Pillar Mountain, making it seem as though there were at least two planes departing. "A shower of spray and we're away!" said Danny. "That's their motto. I never get tired of watching those planes come and go." With no further delay, they trudged up the ramp and across the long dock toward the

Donnelley and Acheson store, built close to the grassy bank and the road leading downtown.

Judson had shopped in Flagstaff and Winslow, and gone down to Phoenix a few times. So he was not about to be impressed with the selection in D & A, as everybody called it. And yet he was. The shelves had practically everything. Part grocery store, part hardware store, part dry goods store, with a goodly supply of sports equipment and toys thrown in – D & A was a great place to browse. It was true that the store didn't have more than one or two brands of any one thing, but if you needed it, the shelves probably had it or something close.

Judson's five dollars were not for the purchase of socks or toothpaste, not under any circumstances! He gravitated toward the toy aisle in the hope that there might be a few model kits. A model was not a toy, he assured himself. Two pages of detailed directions, the necessity of real gluing skills, and then the advanced degree in Model Painting Technology he had given himself on crisp winter evenings in Arizona at his dad's kitchen table – these things convinced him that model building was a big kid's pastime.

Judson was pleased to find a good section of models on the shelves, with a selection ranging from old cars to aircraft to ships to even Frankenstein and Dracula models. He wisely bypassed a model of the same Navy minesweeper that his Dad had destroyed on that terrible day back at the Indian school, and settled on a model of the USS Arizona, the box cover lurid with scenes of the attack at Pearl Harbor. He wasn't the kind that would try to blow it up once he'd built it; he'd guard it from Jake in case the little urchin tried to demonstrate some living history. Judson felt a new connection to the War years now. The battleship represented anew the *why* of Fort Shepley. And he liked that the ship was named for his home state.

He thought about Sokroshera Cove in World War II, and how fate had brought Faltrip and his mystery woman together. Still deep in thought, he stopped by a stand that had some Testors Pla model paint, and selected several colors that might help him create a respectable model. Before he stepped away, he grabbed a tube of model glue, remembering just in time that it would all be a useless task without it. At the counter, he asked the tall, balding clerk for one of their highly useful shopping bags, even though his purchase didn't need one that big. The man was nice enough comply. For the rest of his shopping day, Judson would be wandering in and out of other stores with the Donnelley and Acheson logo displayed for the other shop owners to see.

Judson waited for his friends across the street, which began where D & A and the dock ended. He sat on the steps that led up to the Erskine house, which looked very much like a larger version of the Selivanoff house back in Sokroshera Cove. His dad emerged from D & A with a large box that looked heavy, called for Judson to wait for him, and took his cargo down the oil dock toward the *Salmonchanted Eve*. In a few minutes, Herman and Barbara emerged from their shopping, with Danny in tow.

Their skipper seemed to have bought a new hunting rifle, and had it slung over his shoulder, the boxes of shells carefully left in a bag to one side. Try walking through town in Phoenix or even Flagstaff with a rifle nowadays, even an unloaded one! Kodiak was a strange place, more Wild West in some ways than the Old West locales of the TV Westerns that Judson couldn't escape back in Arizona. The programs had been laughably wrong most of the time; his perceptions of Alaska might also need adjusting.

"So... hunting?" asked Judson, eyeing the rifle. "Yeah, cows!" Danny replied with his signature grin. With wild cows, no corral, and no horses to ride either, to butcher cattle on Sokroshera, you first had to hunt them. But it was hunting of the least challenging kind imaginable. In Judson's imagination, he heard, 'Wait'll one of 'em crosses the road, then plug 'em and throw 'em in th' truck!' His mind provided the accent of a gunslinger from some TV Western, but he highly doubted if any of the characters in those Westerns would find the Sokroshera version of a roundup very exciting. Danny treated the rifle as a tool, like a shovel or hammer. Herman explained the process more fully. After shooting a cow, the men would use the boom truck to haul the carcass down to the Truck Brothers' shed for butchering. Then off to many freezers to be eaten later.

When Danny saw that Mr. Hansen had returned, he looked at him and said with a grin, "Mr. Jeffrey, isn't it about time?" "Probably so," said Mr. Hansen, with an enigmatic glance toward his son. They walked up the street, turned left near the National Bank of Alaska building, which was across from the Kodiak Hotel, where the Hansens had spent their first night in Alaska. Then the group passed the Pacific Northern Airlines office and turned right at the next street. The corner building to his left was Wodlinger Drugs, in a clapboard building implausibly painted bright metallic silver. As they walked down the real, honest to goodness concrete sidewalk, Judson noticed the marquee of a theater: the Orpheum. It was still playing *The Guns of Navarone*. Saturday they'd have a double feature matinee starting at 2 p.m. with *The Parent Trap* and *101 Dalmatians*. Judson had seen those two films last year in Tuba City; he had no wish to see Hayley Mills in *anything* after sitting through *Pollyanna* soon after his Mom died. Were all her films made of sugar and Kleenex? Blech. He wondered if the theater was just getting these year-old gems, and suspected that might be the case.

But the conspiratorial Danny and Mr. Hansen were headed toward another storefront a few steps down. It had a touristy Alaskan name, "The Polar Bear Cafe." They all ducked inside, and Judson saw a well-equipped diner and took in the hometown familiar smell of hamburgers on the grill. But he also got another pleasant shock: "Hey Jay-Jay," shouted little Jake, causing the other customers to turn to view whatever celebrity had just entered. Jake and Sandy Ann dove out of their booth and bolted to say hi to the other three kids. They all managed to squeeze into two adjacent booths, with the addition of Mr. Lindseth, who entered carrying an "O. Kraft and Sons" shopping bag, with a medium-sized box under the other arm.

Sandy Ann filled in the details over hamburgers, French fries, and milkshakes—the All-American menu, even in remote Kodiak. Mr. Lindseth had to make a quick run into town for Mr. Faltrip, and a skiff was sufficient for his freight, so he'd opted for the closest route: into Anton Larsen's Bay, where a friend of theirs picked them up and drove them to town through the back road behind the Navy Base. They were headed home in a few minutes, because Mr. Faltrip's machine part was critical for something Mr. Rezoff was working on. Danny heard of Mr. Lindseth's plans, was scheduled to haul some heavy freight for Mr. Faltrip, and thought it would be fun to invite the other kids along, since the forecast looked good. Mr. Hansen, with freight of his own that Danny could deliver, was happy to be in on the plot. It seemed that they all squeezed fun into their hard work whenever they could. And the sense of community was amazing. I guess it could be worse; they could all be at each other's throats after generations together in a small town. Does that happen and I just don't know about it yet, Judson wondered.

Judson, his dad, and the Rezoff kids were invited to head back to Sokroshera Cove on the Lindseth's skiff, and they agreed, after a last minute run through Knudsens, "...because they have the best candy," explained Jake, who still had money and wanted to rectify that. Finally the kids were all stocked up with everything they cared to buy, and little Jake was supplied with candy to his satisfaction. Wonder how long that stash will last, thought Judson. They walked the short distance back through town to the Donnelley and Acheson store because Mr. Lindseth had forgotten something, and so they could leave Herman behind with Danny. That detour had caused them to backtrack all the way to the channel, where they'd started. The whole downtown area, even though seemingly spread out, could be spanned in a few minutes on foot, and in mere moments by vehicle.

On the walk back toward the channel, Judson could easily tell that Herman was delighted to stay behind with Danny to help load the freight, and serve as deckhand. This guy enjoys being useful, and is not afraid of hard work, thought Judson. He was developing a lot of respect for his new friend. Danny indicated that he and Herman would be back at Sokroshera Cove by sometime tomorrow afternoon. Mr. Lindseth's shopping list was at last complete, and they walked half a block up the street, opposite the post office. There the kids and adults piled into a local fisherman's pickup truck. The driver had agreed to run them out to Anton Larsen's Bay, where Mr. Lindseth's skiff was waiting. All three adults squeezed into the front seat, and the kids bounced around in the back.

The driver's chosen route out of town passed a row of already busy bars. Sandy Ann and Little Jake both noticed a couple of familiar village faces coming out of one of them. "It's Mr. Selivanoff and Marty Pankoff," said Sandy Ann, diplomatically, pointing at the rotund Billy and thin Marty staggering down the sidewalk. "Billy Jr. and Smarty Pants," said Jake, staring as the men sauntered unsteadily toward their next barstool. "They called him Marty Pan in school, and it took no brains to come up with 'Smarty Pants,'" she explained. "Well if his name is Pankoff, wouldn't you call him 'pants off' instead?" asked Judson, giggling at his own joke. Sandy Ann blurted, "Ewww! No one would want to see *that!*" and shuddered. Judson decided that the obvious trouble the bottle was causing folks was no laughing matter, and

started talking about something else. When they turned a corner and were on the "Base Road," Judson pointed out the lumberjack sign on the side of a building and asked about it. "That's Sutliff's," said Jake. "Dad buys all his tools and paint and stuff there."

The main drive to the road that took them to Anton Larson's Bay was on a paved highway as good as any two-lane in Arizona. After being saluted by a Navy man in a guard shack, they passed dozens of two-story army barracks, many in various states of being dismantled. In a more organized fashion, the town of Kodiak was in the process of recycling these military buildings, much as Sokroshera Cove had done. In the shadow of Barometer Mountain, just before the road passed behind the main runway of the airport, they turned a sharp right onto a dirt road that bounced a bit with all the puddle holes that Kodiak streets always seemed to develop. Behind them was a huge dust cloud, and whenever they slowed down, it caught up with them. "I don't like riding around in Kodiak," complained Sandy Ann. "Even when the roads are full of puddles, there's *still* a cloud of dust wherever you go!" Judson had to agree. Sandy Ann explained that during the Katmai eruption of 1912, the island had been covered with volcanic ash, more than two yards thick in some places. The dust was a permanent reminder of that disaster. Judson suddenly appreciated the velvety grass-covered and nearly dustless jeep trails of Sokroshera Island.

Soon their truck passed below some tall radio towers, and later they saw an obviously military-issue building on a small ridge. The red-painted building's design resembled a large cabin, with a huge fireplace chimney facing the road. "The Ski Chalet," someone said. "I think it's just for the Navy folks, though." Soon they were in what was essentially backcountry wilderness, winding up and down steep hills, with occasional sharp curves where the road seemed to hang out over nothing. Compounding the experience was the fact that the road was potholed and bumpy, especially for the three of them in the truck bed. Not wanting to think about how a quick bounce could land him at the bottom of a cliff, Judson concentrated on the dramatic panorama to his right, of the lush green valley with rugged mountains beyond. The truck finally began a long, slow, winding descent to the beach, where Mr. Lindseth's skiff was waiting. The adults spoke for a few moments with the pickup driver, shook hands all around, and the truck bounced away in a cloud of dust.

After transferring their gear to the skiff and getting seated where Mr. Lindseth placed them to balance the load, they headed slowly to the left of two channels that flanked a small island in the bay. "Both sides have a lot of rocks, but it's close to high tide right now," said Mr. Lindseth. He explained while they were at near idle that this was an Opheim skiff, handmade out of local spruce. Ed Opheim and his sons lived in Pleasant Harbor on Spruce Island. Opheim skiffs were the Cadillacs of local transportation, Judson learned, and it was true: they had sharper curves at the bow, the sides sported the signature rounded curve into flat solid wood transoms, and they were as tough as the rough environment of the islands required.

Little Jake supplied the commentary on their propulsion of the moment: "We got a Johnson 33-horse now! Sold the old Evinrude 18-horse last summer," added little Jake. "Ol' 'Smarty Pants' has a Gale 40-horse, but I heard they don't last worth a darn!" At this, Howie Lindseth laughed, and nodded. The boy's knowledge on this topic was impressive, but he wasn't showing off for Judson's benefit. Equipment was very important to these people, Judson realized, because their lives depended on it, and as a result, their conversation focused frequently on their gear. Judson remembered the make and model of the family car they'd had back in Arizona, and this was no different. However, Jake's subtle put-down of Marty Pankoff's choice in outboards was also not unusual; when it came to boats and engines, everyone seemed to be in everyone else's business.

Now safely beyond all the hidden rockpiles of the bay's entrance, Mr. Lindseth "opened it up." The skiff wallowed a bit for a few seconds, seemingly almost stationary with its bow in the air. Then suddenly the skiff shot ahead like a rocket, the flat bottom of the craft quickly achieving "the step" even with everyone aboard. Being "up on the step" meant that the outboard motor ("kicker") had pushed the boat to the very surface of the water, and only the last few feet of hull surface were now in contact with the ocean. This dramatically increased speed, but it also meant that any waves caused the skiff to pound like a jackhammer. His companions seemed used to it, but Judson observed that he'd probably have a sore tailbone before they arrived. With half of Marmot Bay ahead of them, they could easily see the mound of Mount Sokroshera gleaming in the afternoon sun to the left of the much closer mounds of Spruce Island.

About fifteen minutes out, the Johnson 33-horse began to cough, surge, and sputter. The skiff sank back into the waves, wallowing aimlessly. "Excuse me," said Mr. Lindseth. "Get ready to row home!" But he removed the dual hose from one of the orange fuel tanks and slapped the end of it against his leg a couple of times before plugging it into another tank that Jake had helpfully slid his way, squeezing the little rubber bubble in the hose a few times to prime it. Mr. Lindseth pulled the Johnson's cord, reached down to the gear lever on the side, and then twisted the handle to gun the throttle, turning the motor back in the direction they had been heading. No longer starving, the Johnson erupted in blue smoke, sputtered, and roared to life with a lurch. Another piece of the knowledge pie to feast on, thought Judson. Never leave without clean fuel lines and a spare tank. In a small box near the transom were a few cans of bright red oil that the two-stroke cycle outboards needed to have premixed when the tanks were filled. Judson knew he could bet his life that Mr. Lindseth had followed the right recipe on the tank that they were using.

Within a short time, especially compared with the time they'd taken to get to Kodiak on the seiner, they were rounding Selivanoff Point. To his left, at the other side of the cove entrance, was what they called Sentry Point. Judson noticed a medium-sized cabin of graying clapboard that was half-buried in the dunes. But something about it looked a little odd. One section of the wall facing the bay seemed to be sagging, and Judson thought he could make out a rusty metal door behind the wall. Why was it there? Was it a home or a cannery building? Was it military? It didn't seem to make any sense; he resolved to ask Herman about it

when he got the chance. Within moments, the skiff was weaving its way through the seiners at anchor in the cove, and heading toward the beach. Within moments, they could see the jeep and its Ford trailer parked just at the edge of the beach grass. As he hopped out of the skiff onto the soft black sand of Stepan's Beach, he noticed that all of them had hair that was now going at all angles, thanks to the wind out on the water. "Skiff hair," Sandy Ann had called it. Judson was surprised to note that in his head he was still pounding across the bay in the skiff, and that his ears had a slight ring to them long after the insistent whine of the outboard had died away.

### **Tuesday Evening, August 27, 1963. The Pacific Endeavor Seafoods mess hall**

News of the posted notice had raced around the village like a frightened cat. "Attention: Will All Persons Interested in the Future of Pacific Endeavor Seafoods Please Attend an Important Meeting in the Mess Hall at 7:00 P.M." The sign, written in Owen Faltrip's angular block printing, was found taped to the store's front window before anyone had arrived for mail or supplies. A few people, like Mr. Lindseth, Danny and Jake Pedersen, and Will Rezoff, knew what was going on because they had been helping to make it happen. And Laura Rezoff also suspected, although neither Will nor Owen had actually told her, after a thick manila envelope addressed to Mr. Faltrip from a Mr. Lloyd Westerbrook of Raspberry Island had arrived weeks earlier. Mr. Faltrip had been firing off letters and spending a day now and then in Kodiak for some months. Then one morning, he had chartered Harvey Flying Service's floatplane to parts unknown, returning in the late afternoon. Bill Harvey had loaded him and let him off at the smaller beach between the old net building (where the fire truck parked) and the empty bunkhouse, out of sight of the town, so only a couple of people knew that he had even left, and no one knew where he'd gone. Now he seemed ready to spill the beans.

Rumors went into overdrive. The company is being sold. Mr. Faltrip is going to leave. The cannery is going to start processing herring again—only the oldest members of the village thought *that* was a good idea. The cannery is going to close for good. Monsters are coming to eat all of the store's candy—young Jake had supplied that one, accompanied by ominous narration. Judson, on the edges of the adults' world, heard most of the rumors, and wondered almost as much as the rest of them. With the school's population hanging by a thread, he strongly preferred not to leave. Not now, after finding Sokroshera Cove to be the most interesting and unpredictable place he'd ever seen. Especially not after already sharing many adventures with, and beginning to care about, his new friends. He'd never been this close to anyone his own age before.

All afternoon, Mrs. Lindseth, assisted by daughter Sandy Ann, and (rather sullenly, no doubt) by Marla Selivanoff, had worked in the mess hall, stove aglow, pots crashing, chairs being moved about. The room was now clean, bright, and even cheery. An enormous coffee urn was spreading its aroma across the room, and on a table at one end were trays of freshly baked cookies, dishes of canned fruit, and

even new loaves of thick homemade bread, with butter and jam waiting beside them. The long tables had neat stacks of coffee mugs, water glasses, and small, thick china plates, all laid out artistically in the center of each spotlessly clean red and white checkered oilcloth table covering. Mr. Faltrip wanted everyone to feel comfortable, but the spread instead made many people extra nervous. Was this party a funeral for the cannery? What will happen to... what will they do about... where will... what if... rarely had so many anxious people crowded into the mess hall at one time, and never before had a mere sign in a window set so many tongues wagging.

The noise of the villagers crowding into the mess hall finally subsided as Mr. Faltrip stepped in front of the laden refreshment table. A public dissertation from the cannery caretaker was a rare event. Mr. Faltrip looked a little nervous as he cleared his throat and began to talk. "This is not a speech, but just an announcement." Mr. Faltrip had them waiting with almost painful interest, and he had no wish to prolong this. "About a month ago, I completed negotiations with Westerbrook Seafoods for our cannery to take all of their surplus crab, and to change our salmon line to process King Crab. They converted their cannery on Raspberry Island to cold storage, so they will freeze the crab they get, and we will take over their canning operation in exchange for part of our profits. They've got the marketing in place already. The cans will say they're distributed by Westerbrook, but we get to keep our "Morning Mountain" brand name on the cans."

The crowded mess hall sent up a murmur of approval at this. Owen's face showed a hint of a smile, and he continued. "A barge with most of the equipment needed to switch from salmon to crab will be here in a few days, and we are already working on a new crane and bucket system to help us unload crab at the front dock. I'd like to thank Will Rezoff, and the Truck Brothers, and the Lindseths for their help in setting up the switchover and for providing this great spread. I'd also like to announce that the new operational foreman for the crab line will be Jake Pedersen..."—the nods and murmurs seemed to indicate that the village mostly approved of his choice of cannery foreman— "...and he'll be working closely with Kirk Thorsen of Westerbrook Seafoods. My job is to help make sure we sell the stuff, and that we have enough equipment and material in this old place to make it all work. I know I can count on you to get that crab out of the holds and into the cans!" At this, a bit of laughter rippled across the crowded room. "The rest of this, Mr. Pedersen the new foreman can explain." Mr. Faltrip turned and sat in the nearest chair, and Mrs. Lindseth brought him a glass of water. The sparse applause hinted that the villagers were strangely unaccustomed to clapping, but someone in the back let out a loud "Yay!" and the resulting laughter broke the ice.

Jakob Pedersen stood up and cleared his throat. He had a clipboard in his hand, already taking on the role of cannery foreman. This guy's about six times as serious as Truck Brother Danny, thought Judson. "Thank you, Mr. Faltrip, for doing the legwork on this change. And thank you for trusting me with this new position." He cleared his throat, looked around at no one in particular, and spoke again. "We'll mostly take Westerbrook cannery's overflow, at least at first, but it'll be a good idea to have a few crabbers of our own. I'll talk to any of the boat captains about maybe

converting a couple of our fleet into crabbers. We can do most of the work here, and new winches, lines, and buoys are on order. The barge that's coming will have thirty or so spare crab pots that might need some repairing before we can drop 'em anywhere. So for now, enjoy this great spread, and stay here as long as you like." He looked briefly at Mr. Faltrip, who nodded and waved his arm in the direction of the food. "I will start making job and shift lists by next week, and hope to start processing a couple of weeks into the season at the latest. If you've got any friends or relatives who would like to work, they'll get first priority on jobs, but we're gonna be advertising openings and putting people up in the bunkhouse again." The elder Jake just turned toward the table to get some goodies, and the assembled villagers managed to clap briefly, as they began moving toward the serving tables. There was a strong sense that Mr. Faltrip had just saved their village. There was a lot of back pounding and congratulating that night.

Judson noted that Billy Selivanoff, father of Marla, the twins, and little Alexander, Billy's bar mate Marty Pankoff, and a woman he guessed was Anya Bazaroff, mother of Ward, seemed unhappy with the news. He was unable to imagine why. He noticed after a few minutes that all three had left. However, this was a night of celebration, and he sat at the far end of one of the picnic benches with Sandy Ann, Herman, Barbara, and little Jake, and ate his fill of the fresh bread covered liberally with butter and local salmonberry jam. At one point, he looked at Sandy Ann and remarked, "Sure looks different around here already!" "I'll say," she said, mid-mouthful, a cookie in each hand. Just about then, Mr. Faltrip wandered over to the kids and mentioned that he was going to do a spray and play demonstration with his fire truck on Labor Day, to the glee of all the local kids. I'm still not sure why that fire truck is so darn special to him, thought Judson.

Jake the younger finally had his fill of the cookies and bread. He stood up and declared, "I'm going to the swings before it gets too dark. Who's going?" Judson indicated that he was going to stick around awhile, but waved as the kids left for the stand of spruce trees on a small hill that served as the kids' own homemade amusement park. The kids left him behind without protest; they probably thought his dad wanted him for something. But he was on his own mission; Judson needed some answers. He went and sat with the Lindseths and Mrs. Rezoff and his dad. His tablemates gone as well, Truck Brother Jake also sat down at the long table. Mr. Faltrip had apparently gone off on his nightly rounds. At the first lull in the conversation, Judson said, "I saw Mr. Selivanoff and that Marty fellow and Mrs. Bazaroff leave pretty early, and they didn't look all that happy." He let the statement suggest the questions. Mr. Lindseth reached across the table and mussed Judson's hair, in what must be a common local sign of affection. "You are like a hawk, Jay-Jay! I've never seen you miss a detail once you've been told what to look for!" That wasn't an answer, of course, and Judson looked at the other faces, hoping for some clarification.

Jakob Pedersen broke the silence. "I can help you with Anya. The only Mrs. Bazaroff around here is Carla, Windy's wife, who lives up the creek from Petey and Dottie. I wish Anya was more like her brother. Anya... she's not a Mrs. and never has been." Judson's puzzled face finally registered the meaning. Jakob continued, "*Ah-Hookh,*

all different fathers—much as it's anybody's business. Her youngest is just a bit shy of a year old now." "Hey, that's a little too much for the boy to handle," said Mr. Lindseth, but his wife just said, "Howie, this guy gets people better than anyone else his age I've ever seen, and he doesn't hold it against them." "No he sure doesn't," added Laura Rezoff, and smiled at him.

Their attention was getting a bit uncomfortable, but didn't overpower his curiosity. "Uh, but how does she live? I mean... four kids... must be hard." Judson's question was obvious, and the answer was more puzzling to him than ever. Mrs. Rezoff, who could be counted on to see the best in anyone, was almost harsh now. "She lives with her great aunt Anicia, who can barely walk anymore. If you drop by the house, you see in two seconds that the only work being done is by her aunt. Anya does as little as possible for those poor kids. Oh, just so you're not confused, Anicia Novikoff is also Will's grandmother."

The group chuckled as Judson smiled and shook his head, signaling that it was indeed hard to keep all the names and relationships straight. Then she turned her head to look right at Judson, and answered his question about the family's livelihood. "Ward worked this summer as deckhand for Billy Junior—um, Mr. Selivanoff, and that brought in some money. Sometimes people give them things, to help out. In fact, Mrs. Smith over at the Mission in Ouzinkie sent Anya a box of cloth diapers and children's clothing - we sorta keep Joyce informed on what we need around here. It came in yesterday. Would you deliver it to them tomorrow? I don't think it's too heavy to carry." Judson nodded, but was still deciphering the strange behavior at the meeting. "So why was Mrs.—I mean why was she upset tonight?" asked Judson, still trying to get to the bottom of it. He could easily see that the cannery news was a big break, and couldn't understand any of the negative reaction. "You're like a bulldog pulling on a rope, Jay-Jay," laughed Mr. Lindseth, and his wife nodded, but smiled at Judson as if she saw that as a good thing.

Jakob Pedersen stroked his beard and thought for a moment, then slowly began an explanation. "When Betty and Danny and I were all living in the Mission in Ouzinkie, she was in the Mission too for a while, I think until her great aunt took her in. I kind of liked her then,"—he slipped in a wry smile, shaking his head—"but something slipped in her mind I think. She's never had a good—a *healthy* relationship with a guy. I'm lucky I got loose of her when I did! But she sort of holds it against me for some reason." Mr. Lindseth cleared his throat and looked at Jakob. "I guess you found your pain elsewhere, and later, old man," said Mr. Lindseth, referring to Jake's wife, who had divorced him to run off with another man. Mr. Lindseth slapped him on the shoulder. Jakob didn't look up at this. He simply nodded.

Betty Lindseth sent her husband a withering glance before she added, "Oh, there's bound to be a woman out there *somewhere* who wants to be with a big cannery foreman," and grinned at her brother. Jakob grinned. "Got that right, sister. If we could only move the Pacific Endeavor cannery to Hawaii or Fiji or someplace, I'd have a chance! This is a great place to *bring* a girl, but not a great place to *get* one, I'm afraid." Judson smiled to himself at the family dynamic going on around the

table, with the adults acting so much like little kids sometimes. But he also noticed Mrs. Lindseth looking intently at her brother with an expression that Judson couldn't read. Jakob Pedersen seemed to avoid her gaze. Did I miss something here, he wondered.

Then Jake abruptly continued in a different direction: "But in answer to what's eating Billy and Marty, well, when Mr. Ardet first started running salmon here, Billy's dad, Billy Selivanoff Senior, was the herring plant watchman, and Ardet was kind and kept him on. Gave him the storekeeper's job, once the store was repaired and stocked. When Faltrip came around a year later, Billy Senior couldn't stand him, and didn't make much of a secret of it. He knew better than to take him on directly, Owen being Mr. Ardet's friend and all, but he found little ways of making his life more difficult. Faltrip says the guy was none too friendly with him even when he was stationed up at the fort years before. Then one day Ardet was going over the books with one of the New Orleans guys and discovered Billy Senior had been skimming money for years. Ardet had Faltrip fire him on the spot. I always wonder what Faltrip said to him—afterward he always seemed really afraid of ol' Owen."

In a flash, Judson remembered Billy Jr.'s tirade in the store on his first morning in the village. What had that been all about? Judson turned his attention back to the conversation. Jakob was still explaining, looking at Mr. Hansen. "But even so, they let him run a seiner, 'cause he had a family to provide for. Besides keeping him out of their way, they knew that by running the seiner he'd have to behave, because if you screw up your boat, you starve. But there's been bad blood ever since. No Selivanoff is ever really happy working for the likes of Faltrip. They do it anyway, because good ol' Pacific Endeavor Seafoods has given them steady income, enough to buy the *Marla S.* three years ago, for example. Billy Senior passed away about five years ago, but I'll bet he never said one word to Faltrip the whole time."

"Not to be rude, but is it really OK to wash all our laundry in front of the... in front of young Jay-Jay here?" asked Howie Lindseth. His wife Betty and Laura Rezoff answered one right after the other, Betty saying, "Well, he doesn't seem to hold grudges, and he may as well know the swamp he's fallen into." Laura just added, "I'm curious to see what you think of all this, once we're done blabbing here," and emitted a tiny giggle. But when she looked back at Judson, her face was serious. Jake Pedersen just nodded and proceeded with his story. "Mr. Pankoff, Marty Pan, well, he wanted the job of head machinist at the cannery, but Faltrip fired him and got Will Rezoff for the job when he found one of the cannery's air compressors and a bunch of other cannery equipment under a tarp in Marty's yard. Even Marty's house, right there by the creek, on the *cannery* side, is on Pacific Endeavor's property, although Marty always denies it. Faltrip lets him live there because it was built before Ardet bought the place, and it's not worth the trouble to fight about it. 'Smarty Pants' doesn't fit the guy all that well I guess." At this, the group laughed at the illogic of the nickname, and Judson smiled, too. His father just shook his head. The man had left the things he stole under a tarp, practically in plain sight, at the house that was closest to the cannery, so not very brilliant, indeed!

Judson looked at Laura Rezoff expressing what he'd thought about earlier, "It seems funny to me that Mr. Selivanoff kept bugging you as if the store was trying to rob *him*, when all this time, his dad was the one who actually did all the stealing. It's like he has it all... *backwards!*" Betty and Laura just looked at each other, and Betty finally said, "That's how Billy Jr. thinks, Jay-Jay." Mr. Hansen said, "I see you've met my son!" and smiled broadly at Judson, accompanied by appreciative chuckles. Jake continued, "So to conclude this gossip fest, those two seem to just wait for the opportunity to make ol' Faltrip trouble. But Faltrip's a straight shooter. That's why I jumped at the offer to be foreman. To work for the man. Faltrip has always been more than fair with me. So I won't let a family embarrassment, even if they're *guilty*, keep me from dealing straight with someone."

"I see why you got the job, Mr. Jake—you think like Fat Lip... er, Faltrip does." The group chuckled again at Judson's use of the unspoken nickname. "But I don't know what to think about some of these..."—he wanted to say 'people'—"uh ...stories." His dad broke in. "Judson, this might seem to be changing the subject, but it's not. When school starts, I will have to think of each student as worth teaching, as being able to learn. It's not always easy. But we both live *here* now, and we need to be careful not to judge folks here. And we need to remember..."—His dad scratched the top of his head the way he always did when he was carefully choosing his words—"...that nobody can plan what family they come from. There's a lot of history between folks here, and some of the kids have been through some rough stuff. But whatever happened to bring them into the world, or how their family might have screwed up, they are here now, and valuable now. Act like that, and people will eventually see that you respect them." Betty looked at Mr. Hansen. "I think he's learned that already!" Judson thought of his run-ins with Ward and wondered how true that really was. But he just nodded.

Judson knew that his dad was not trying to impress anybody. His dad's better nature had been blossoming in this new environment, and Judson was happy to see it. Besides, since the personal family topics came up in the group, he had spoken to Judson in the group. Mr. Hansen seemed satisfied that his teaching philosophy had inadvertently come out in this setting. Mrs. Rezoff looked at Jeffrey Hansen for a moment and said, "That outlook is probably how you survived teaching Junior High kids at that Indian school. Some of those kids have rough lives, too, and I'll bet it helped to have a teacher like you." Truck Brother Jake added, "Listen, Teach, we will help you any way we can. We're so glad you came and that we'll have school again this year!" Mr. Hansen just nodded. "I'll second that!" said Mr. Faltrip, back from his rounds. How long had he been standing there?